



Cathy McMorris

7th District State Representative

2001 Session Report & Questionnaire

March 2001

Serving citizens in...

- Ferry
- Lincoln
- Okanogan
- Pend Oreille
- Spokane and
- Stevens counties

Committees:

- State Government,
Co-chair
- Commerce and Labor
- Health Care
- Western States
Forestry Task Force
- Joint Legislative Audit &
Review Committee

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Dear friends,

We are now just over a month into the 2001 legislative session with another three months to go. Much of our time to date has been spent discussing legislation in House committees. Soon the action will move to the House floor for open debate.

For the second time in a row, voters elected an evenly divided House, made up of 49 Republicans and 49 Democrats.

One of our biggest challenges will be agreeing on a two-year operating budget. The cost of simply continuing current services, and implementing initiatives approved by voters in November, will exceed available revenues by several hundred million dollars. With so much at stake, it's critical that we turn our attention toward a more accountable and efficient government, keeping the taxpayers' needs especially in mind.

As the House State Government Committee co-chair, one of my top priorities this session is to implement reforms that will reduce regulatory red tape and get government off the backs of citizens.

I also have a deep concern about access to rural health care. That's one of the reasons I asked to serve on the House Health Care Committee this year.

This newsletter outlines some of my goals during this session on your behalf. In addition, I am including a short survey to get a better idea about your views of specific issues we are facing this session.

As always, please feel free to call, write or e-mail my office. Representative government works best when you are involved. Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve you!

Cathy McMorris, State Representative

Energy — Keeping the lights on

The looming energy crisis in Washington can be blamed not only on California, but on our state's lack of a common-sense energy strategy. Washington has not made a major commitment toward new electricity generation since the 1970s.

The governor's energy proposal is a modest step in the right direction. However, conservation measures alone won't solve this problem. We need to clear a regulatory path that will encourage new generation facilities to be developed. I am also supporting tax incentives to encourage existing power plants to upgrade and produce more energy. In addition, we also need to do everything possible to preserve the Northwest preference, in which the Bonneville Power Administration has to supply electricity to Pacific Northwest states first.

Representative *Cathy* McMorris

Preserving rural access to health care

Although the economy has been booming on the western end of the state, here in Eastern Washington, it's not been as good. Small businesses are having a hard time making ends meet. Orchardists are pulling up trees in the face of slumping apple prices. It's now beginning to affect our local hospitals and nursing homes.

Government hasn't made it any easier for our rural health care facilities. A main concern is that hospitals providing services to Medicare and Medicaid patients are reimbursed far below cost. Many rural health care facilities are reaching the point where they can't break even. In some cases, the margin is so slim, some rural hospitals and nursing homes are on the verge of closing.

For our local communities to survive and have a chance to thrive, we must have two basic elements: access to education and health care. If we lose our rural health care access, it could devastate our local communities.

This year, I've introduced legislation that would allow small rural hospitals qualified under the "Critical Access Hospital Program" to receive Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements at cost. Health care facilities within the 7th District that would qualify include Davenport, Deer Park and Odessa. Grand Coulee, which borders the 7th District, also would qualify.

In addition, I'm working on the House Health Care Committee to find ways to make health care more affordable and to address a growing shortage of health care professionals. Part of that includes a measure I've sponsored to remove the sales and use tax from home medical equipment, insulin, prosthetic devices and certain dental work.



Rep. McMorris recently met with local doctors to discuss health care issues affecting the 7th District. They included (from left) Ron Rehn, Colville; (Rep. McMorris); Dr. Sam Selinger, Spokane; Dr. Michael Snook, Colville; and Dr. Rob Justice, Omak.

Reining in government

I've long been concerned about the power state agencies take upon themselves to adopt rules which infringe upon our basic rights. Teen work restrictions, ergonomics, shoreline management rules — these are examples of regulations adopted by state agencies without legislative oversight. I believe it is time to restore power to the people. That's why I've introduced major regulatory reform legislation which will work to rein in out-of-control agency rule making.

The bill sets strict measures agencies must follow to adopt rules. It limits the rule-making authority of the Department of Ecology and the Department of Labor and Industries — the worst offenders in making bureaucratic rules without regard to the people. These two agencies would only be able to adopt rules as specifically required by federal law, and as specifically authorized by the Legislature. The measure also creates provisions for judicial review of rules, technical assistance before enforcement, and most importantly, legislative review.

Public policy works best when it comes from the people through elected officials, not agency bureaucrats. This legislation puts that power back into your hands.

Providing local control, flexibility in growth planning

The growth management law may be working well in Central Puget Sound. However, for those of us in rural Eastern Washington cities and counties, the Growth Management Act's (GMA) rigid one-size-fits-all rules all but ignore the fact that we have an entirely different set of needs. Unfortunately, we are forced to live by the decisions of a non-elected state board empowered to tell local officials how to plan our future.

I believe we must restore local planning decisions to our local elected officials. That's why I have sponsored a package of bills intended to provide flexibility and local control within the GMA. The measures would provide land-use flexibility to economically distressed family farm owners, eliminate the authority of the hearings boards to invalidate local plans, allow rural counties and cities to develop alternative planning methods, establish a planning review schedule, and allow up to two locations for major industrial activity outside urban growth areas.

In addition, we are looking at revising the Department of Ecology's newly adopted shoreline rules so that property owners and rural economic development aren't so severely affected.

7th District Legislative Questionnaire

Representative government works best when people actively participate. Please take a few moments to complete this survey and return it. Your responses will be important to me in better representing you when I am voting on legislation.

Legislative priorities

1. Rank from 1 to 10 (1 being most important) the issues which are important to you.

____ Crime ____ Transportation ____ Education
____ Environment ____ Health care ____ Property taxes
____ Social services ____ Energy supplies
____ Modifying the Growth Management Act
____ Other (please specify) _____

Education

2. Different ideas have been offered about how to improve K-12 education in our state. What are your education priorities? Please rank the following in level of importance to you (1 most important, 7 least important)

____ Improve teacher training
____ Reduce class sizes
____ Raise teacher salaries
____ Allow school levies to pass with simple majority
____ Increase academic requirements for graduation
____ Provide housing subsidy for teachers living in high cost-of-living areas
____ Offer higher salary levels for teachers living in high cost-of-living areas

Transportation

3. Please rank the following transportation solutions in order of importance to you (1 most important, 6 least important).

____ More roads and lanes of traffic
____ Reducing traffic on existing roads
____ Better road maintenance
____ Pedestrian and bike paths
____ Better transportation alternatives (e.g. rapid transit, expand local bus services)
____ Other (please specify) _____

Elections

4. Which do you support for our state's primary election system?

- ☐ A blanket primary, in which voters are allowed to pick candidates from any party for any office
- ☐ A "closed" primary, in which voters must formally register a party affiliation before the election
- ☐ An "open" primary, which doesn't require registration, but does require voters to choose a single party's ballot on election day

Energy

5. Population growth, reduced snow pack, low reservoirs, and California's problems have combined to heavily strain our state's energy supply. Please rank the following energy proposals in order of importance to you. (1 most important, 5 least important)

____ Encourage development of generation facilities through a combination of tax breaks and reduction of regulatory barriers
____ Impose temporary price caps on wholesale power
____ Encourage citizens to conserve electricity
____ Stop sending Pacific Northwest-generated power to bail out California
____ Other (please specify) _____

Government regulations

6. The Department of Ecology has proposed changes to the state's Shoreline Management Act (SMA) that would restrict the use of land abutting a river, lake or other shoreline. Some people are concerned that these new restrictions take away individuals' property rights and hurt rural economic development. How do you feel?

- ☐ Revise the SMA so that it won't hurt property owners and rural economic development
- ☐ Leave the SMA changes the way they are now

Health Care

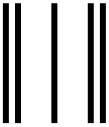
7. How should prescription drug discounts for seniors be funded?

- ☐ Pharmacies should fund them
- ☐ The state should fund them

Demographics

8. Please check the appropriate boxes which apply to you.

- ☐ Property owner ☐ Small business owner
- ☐ Homeowner ☐ Natural resource industry worker



Please
place
stamp
here



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Return the survey by folding with this mail panel facing outside.

Representative *Cathy* McMorris

2001 Legislative Priorities

- ◆ Lower the tax burden for those who need it most
- ◆ Establish higher education standards so that no child is left behind
- ◆ Improve our roads and highways
- ◆ Protect neighborhoods and improve safety
- ◆ Ensure access to affordable health care
- ◆ Make government more citizen-centered and accountable

Do you want more information on these issues from Rep. McMorris?

If you'd like your name to be added to Rep. McMorris' mailing list for frequent updates on issues affecting the 7th District, please fill out the following information.

NAME: Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ZIP: _____

If you would like to be included on Rep. McMorris' e-mail list for legislative updates, please include your e-mail address:

E-MAIL: _____

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